



3.0

Parks Design Guidelines



PARK DESIGN GUIDELINES

These guidelines are intended to guide general siting and design of Surprise parks.

General Guidelines

- It is important to understand the physical characteristics of the site and how well the site can absorb the man-made intrusions. It is better to design a park into a site with good existing aesthetics rather than try to add in aesthetics.
- Don't use leftover parcels for parks. If the parcel was not desirable for development then it's probably not a good park site either.
- Understand the natural vegetation and drainage patterns of the site to avoid erosion and soil compaction problems.
- When locating and orienting facilities, consider the site microclimates.
- Provide adequate street frontage for the park. See further standards under each park type. Parks should have an open, public, part of the neighborhood feel.
- Locate park sites, where possible, close to transit centers to encourage and facilitate alternative modes of travel to the park.
- Provide good access to the park and to the park facilities for all users including the elderly and disabled.
- Permanent park facilities should be designed to have a life expectancy of 25 years. Materials should be durable, of the highest quality affordable. This will increase the life expectancy, the park aesthetics, and will reduce the annual operating maintenance costs.
- Do not build permanent park facilities in a 100-year flood plain.
- When locating facilities such as parking and lighting, take into consideration the surrounding uses and neighbors.
- Provide sufficient parking so that vehicles do not overflow into adjacent neighborhoods on a regular basis.
- Generally, if a park is going to include play fields, it should have sufficient rectangular areas to accommodate open sports fields.
- Plants should be working plants. They should be functional and look good. The types of functions that plants can perform include border protection, screening, pedestrian traffic control, space organization and definition, separation of play areas, and provide shade.
- The amount of lighting should be the minimum necessary for safety and to accommodate the park functions. While function is foremost, the aesthetics of the fixture and how it provides light should also be given much consideration.
- Adopt material standards that are repeated throughout the park: masonry walls, buildings, sign pads, roofing, lighting, water fountains, trash/ash receptacles, and benches.
- Where roads are part of the park design, they should be designed to control vehicular speed. Pedestrian and bicycle routes should be clearly marked and, where possible, be separate from vehicular travel.

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3.1 General Guidelines



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3.1 **General Guidelines**

Signage

- Signage should be unified and relate to the total park design.
- Signs should, first and foremost, be basic, functional and serve the need for which they were designed.
- They should be kept to the minimum necessary to direct and inform park users.
- They should not just become landscape decorations.
- Each park should have a unique and identifiable sign package until such time as the City develops a citywide park signage program.
- Conflicting park uses should be clearly marked.
- Don't get too inventive with arrows or symbols – avoid confusing signs.
- Vehicular control signs should first meet City and State requirements. Secondly, they can be designed as part of the overall sign package.
- Any displays and written information should be located where they can be seen by a seated individual and should also provide information accessible to the blind.

Parking

- Parking shall meet ADA standards and City of Surprise parking requirements.
- All parking lots shall be lit, meeting current Illuminating Engineering Society standards.
- Parking lots shall have trees to provide shade at a minimum of one tree per five parking stalls. Parking lot trees shall be installed at a minimum 24" box size and the trees shall be thornless.



ADA Standards

Congress enacted The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1992 to help ensure that equal access is provided to all users of public and private facilities and programs. There is an understanding, however, of the need to balance accessibility with preserving natural areas.

The ADA requires:

- new buildings be accessible
- renovations be accessible
- barriers to existing buildings be removed when 'readily achievable'

It is beneficial to invite persons with disabilities to review existing parks and register comments and preferences in writing to the both the Community Development Department and the Community and Recreation Services Department. The City should be committed to upgrading any facilities that do not meet ADA standards and assuring that all new construction does indeed meet ADA standards.

City accessibility standards:

- Every park must have at minimum one accessible route from the site access to the primary accessible entrance. Ramps or curb cuts will be used to maintain the continuous route and must meet ADA standards.
- The accessible route must be a minimum of 36 inches wide. Protrusions into the accessible route cannot be greater than 4 inches between the heights of 27 inches and 80 inches.
- The accessible route must not have a slope greater than 5% (1:20) nor have a loose or irregular surface. The area of any parking lot intended for use by persons with disabilities shall not have a slope greater than 2%. Sign parking spaces intended for the people with disabilities with international accessible symbol.
- Drain grates shall be set perpendicular to the direction of travel.
- Stairs included in the accessible route must have a tread of at least 11 inches, no open risers, and handrails on both sides.
- Ramps must not have a slope greater than 8% (1:12) and must not rise greater than 30 inches without a landing. Ramps must have, at a minimum, landings at the beginning and end. If the ramp does not have curbs and is higher than 6 inches or longer than 6 feet, it must have handrails on both sides.
- If restroom facilities are provided in the park, they must be on the accessible route and have at least one accessible unisex toilet. Refer to most current ADA guidelines for dimensions and equipment.
- Any displays and written information should be located where they can be seen by a seated individual and should also provide information accessible to the blind.
- When drinking fountains are provided in the park, at least one must be on the accessible route. It must be accessible to wheelchair users with a clear, 48 inch by 30 inch, paved space in front of the fountain and a clearance under the fountain of 27 inches high and 17 inches deep.
- Picnic sites must be accessible and must be on the accessible route. Access to the picnic site, tables, and barbeque grills must meet ADA standards except where it is technically not feasible.
- In existing parks, attempts should be made to conform to ADA standards by removing barriers such as steps, narrow doors, texture changes, and placement of site furniture.
- New playgrounds shall be designed with appropriate transfer stations to meet ADA access standards. The City should consider upgrading existing facilities to meet these same standards.

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3.2 ADA Standards



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3.3 Specific Park Standards

Specific Park Standards

Neighborhood Park

Neighborhood parks should serve the daily recreational needs of nearby residents. Generally, non-programmed facilities are provided such as playgrounds and multi-use fields.

Neighborhood park standards:

- serve the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood
- 5 acres - 10 acres preferred
- provide a service radius of ½ mile

Neighborhood parks are intended to be easily accessible by walking and biking. As adopted Code dictates, parking spaces can be provided, though this is flexible since access via walking and biking is preferred. The park should provide for both active and passive uses and lighting should be limited except for safety and security.

Street frontage is important to each park to add to the sense that the park is a public space. At a minimum, the street frontage should equal the square root of the park's total square footage. Example, a five-acre park (217,800 square feet) would have at least 470 feet of street frontage.

Per the City of Surprise General Plan *"Neighborhood or school parks proposed as an amenity in a subdivision shall be developed in conjunction with the first phase of the proposed development"*.

The facilities in a neighborhood park may include:

- playground
- small basketball/multi-use court(s)
- soccer/multi-use field
- free play areas

Neighborhood park design considerations:

- separate the play areas of different age levels by using walkways, seating areas or landscape buffers; avoid using fencing as a divider
- conflicting activities should be separated
- minimize plantings near play areas; provide mainly large trees for shade

Playground design considerations:

- shall meet or exceed current standards as set forth by: U.S. Consumer Projects Safety Commission, American Society of Test/Measurement, Americans with Disabilities Act, and International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association
- locate where visible from the street or parking for surveillance
- play areas shall be level except where mounds or undulations are specifically provided for play
- play areas shall have a resilient material, especially under play equipment
- avoid metal for play equipment and benches
- provide a variety of play experiences and several activities
- locate at least 50 feet from any hazard such as a street or barbecue grill
- provide shaded seating nearby for parents
- playgrounds shall have nighttime security lighting to prevent vandalism
- for pre-school playgrounds – avoid too many moving parts; provide sand for digging and playing; provide a variety of climbing apparatus, slides and swings; locate close to grass
- for 6 to 10 year olds – provide climbing apparatus; areas for running; equipment from which to hang by hands or legs; water for splashing, molding sand or making mud
- for older kids 10 to 14 – provide gymnasium type equipment (for boys – horizontal bars, trapeze, parallel rings; for girls - similar to those provided for 6 to 10 year olds plus some gymnastic type



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3.3 Specific Park Standards

apparatus); provide areas for organized games.

Suggested minimum setbacks of facilities from adjacent residential uses:

| Facility | non-lighted (ft.) | lighted (ft.) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| basketball court | 50 | 100 |
| game court for less than ten people | 25 | 50 |
| tables/barbeques | 50 | 100 |
| volleyball court | 50 | 100 |

Community Park

- serve two or more neighborhoods
- have an optimal size of 20 to 50 acres but should be based on land needed to accommodate intended uses
- provide a service radius of ½ to 3 miles.

Community parks should provide for both active and passive uses. They serve best if located near an existing natural area or greenway to expand the recreational opportunities. A community park is a good park to combine with a school. A good parking ratio to achieve is 60 spaces per ballfield and 5 to 7 spaces per acre of active use.

Street frontage is important to each park to add to the sense that the park is a public space. At a minimum, the street frontage should equal the square root of the park's total square footage. Example, a 20-acre park (871,200 square feet) would have at least 935 feet of street frontage.

The facilities in a community park may include:

- playgrounds
- basketball/multi-use court(s)
- soccer/multi-use fields
- free play areas
- tennis courts
- volleyball courts
- swimming pools
- shuffleboard
- horseshoes
- trails
- ornamental gardens
- group picnic areas
- recreation centers

Community park design considerations:

- separate the play areas of different age levels by using walkways, seating areas or landscape buffers; avoid using fencing as a divider
- conflicting activities should be separated
- minimize plantings near play areas; provide mainly large trees for shade

Playground design considerations:

- shall meet or exceed current standards as set forth by: U.S. Consumer Projects Safety Commission, American Society of Test/Measurement, Americans with Disabilities Act, and International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association
- locate where visible from the street or parking for surveillance
- play areas shall be level except where mounds or undulations are specifically provided for play
- play areas shall have a resilient material, especially under play equipment
- avoid metal for play equipment and benches
- provide a variety of play experiences and several activities



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3.3 Specific Park Standards

- locate at least 50 feet from any hazard such as a street or barbeque grills
- provide shaded seating nearby for parents
- playgrounds shall have nighttime security lighting to prevent vandalism
- for pre-school playgrounds – avoid too many moving parts; provide sand for digging and playing; provide a variety of climbing apparatus, slides and swings; locate close to grass
- for 6 to 10 year olds – provide climbing apparatus; areas for running; equipment from which to hang by hands or legs; water for splashing, molding sand or making mud
- for older kids 10 to 14 – provide gymnasium type equipment (for boys – horizontal bars, trapeze, parallel rings; for girls - similar to those provided for 6 to 10 year olds plus some gymnastic type apparatus); provide areas for organized games.

Suggested minimum setbacks of facilities from adjacent residential uses:

| Facility | non-lighted (ft.) | lighted (ft.) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| baseball/softball diamond | 50 | 100 |
| basketball court | 50 | 100 |
| game court for less than ten people | 25 | 50 |
| tables/barbeques | 50 | 100 |
| tennis courts | 50 | 100 |
| volleyball court | 50 | 100 |

Special Use Parks

Special use facilities are dedicated to one specific recreational use and are generally planned to serve the entire community. There are no specific size recommendations for this type of facility. Location depends on the type of specific use.

Examples are:

- an aquatic center or tennis center
- nature park or arboretum
- amphitheater
- archaeological or historical park
- dog park
- skate park

Linear Parks and Greenbelts

Greenways provide passive recreational opportunities. They emphasize harmony with the natural environment and can enhance property values of adjacent properties. Natural greenways are determined by available suitable natural resources but often follow drainage corridors or other natural features. Man-made greenways can include power line right-of-ways, railway beds, or pipeline easements. Greenways should be an integral part of the trail system and can be along boulevards or parkways if they have a park-like quality. Greenways can serve as alternate transportation routes for residents, as fitness facilities as well as recreation facilities, and as natural buffers. Parking should be provided at trailheads with the number of spaces dependent of the expected use. 50-foot minimum width, optimal is 200 feet. Greenways can accommodate hiking, walking, jogging, bicycling, skating, and horseback riding. Trails within greenways can be paved or unpaved, depending on expected use.



General Facility and Equipment Standards

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3.4 General Facility and Equipment Standards

Restrooms

- Restroom buildings should be located in all community or regional parks and at primary trailheads. Neighborhood parks will be required to provide restrooms as determined by the city.
- The building should be visible and reasonably close to a public street.
- Ample paving should be provided around the building for ease of cleaning and to protect any nearby grass. Paving should be such that it creates minimal vibration to wheelchair users.
- Security lighting should be provided on or near the building.

Picnic Areas

- Provide two tables per acre for each of the first 3 acres, then one table per acre.
- Tables shall be minimum of 6 feet long. Tables at ADA accessible sites will have one accessible end.
- Each table shall be placed in the center of a 4-inch thick, reinforced concrete pad, minimum size 10 feet by 9 feet.
- All picnic areas shall be ADA accessible, except where technically not feasible.

Barbeque Grills

- Provide one barbeque grill for every two tables. A group picnic area can use one barbeque grill for four tables.
- All barbeque grills at ADA accessible sites shall be wheelchair accessible.

Benches

- Benches are required at all playgrounds and athletic courts. In addition, they should also be evenly distributed throughout the park.
- Benches can be stand alone or integrated into walls or other features.
- The minimum length of a seating section shall be 6 feet.
- At least 50% of all park seating should be wheelchair accessible, along the accessible route, with companion seating space located adjacent when a group of benches is provided. When there is a single bench it must be accessible and have an armrest.
- 50% of all the accessible benches must provide an armrest.
- Bench locations shall not obstruct the main path of travel.

Drinking Fountains

- All parks shall have at least one chilled drinking fountain.
- Fountains are required near athletic courts and restrooms, where applicable.
- They should be at least 25 feet from any sand play areas.
- All fountains shall be vandal resistant.
- All fountains along the accessible route shall be wheelchair accessible.

Bicycle Racks

- Bicycle racks shall be located throughout the park and at the main entrance to any major building.

Trash and Ash Containers

- Provide an adequate number of trash and ash containers throughout the park. At a minimum, they shall be located near any parking areas, at the entrances to major buildings, at restrooms, playgrounds, picnic areas, and spectator areas.

Baseball and Softball Fields

- Fields shall be crowned in the center with drainage to the sides. However, if specific site conditions make this unacceptable, other drainage options will be considered.
- The preferred field orientation has the back of the home plate facing due north to northeast, and the first baseline running west. However, some sites may require variations from this preferred orientation.



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General Facility and Equipment Standards

- Ballfields at community parks should be lighted for nighttime use. However, each community park site shall be evaluated independently to determine if lighting is appropriate. Lighting at neighborhood park sites with ballfields shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. All poles within or near a playing area that are not protected by a fence shall have 6-foot high pole pads. Also, all fixtures shall use shielding systems to reduce spill-off light.
- Spectator areas are required at community park ballfields and at all regulation baseball fields. Spectator areas are desirable in neighborhood parks but shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Spectator areas shall consist of either aluminum or concrete tiered seating.

Soccer and Multi-Use Fields

- Typically, the long axis of the field should extend north to south.
- Where there are multiple fields, the minimum space between fields shall be 9 feet.
- At a minimum, an area of 10 feet wide will be provided around the field with no trees, berms, planters, or sidewalks.
- Fields should typically have a corner pitch drainage pattern unless specific site conditions prohibit this.

Basketball and Multi-Use Courts

- The court surface shall be poured concrete with a medium broom finish to prevent slipping.
- Provide a minimum of 10 feet between courts that are placed side-by-side or end-to-end.
- All markings on the playing surface shall be applied using a wear-resistant, colored substance, a minimum of 2 inches wide. Color to be determined during design.

Tennis Courts

- Tennis courts shall be oriented with the long axis north to south.
- Courts shall be concrete with an appropriate slip-resistant surfacing. Colors shall be determined during design.
- Side by side courts shall be a minimum of 12 feet apart. End to end courts shall be a minimum of 21 feet apart.
- All markings on the playing surface shall be applied using a wear-resistant, colored substance, a minimum of 2 inches wide. Color to be determined and approved by the City during design.

Racquetball and Handball Courts

- Courts shall be concrete with a slip-resistant broom finish.
- All markings on the playing surface shall be applied using a wear-resistant, colored substance. Color to be determined and approved by the City during design.
- Courts shall slope to a single floor drain placed near the front wall corner.
- Front and sidewalls should be a minimum 20 feet high; the back wall, if provided, should be a minimum of 12 feet high.

Volleyball Courts

- Volleyball courts can be concrete, sand or grass.
- When placed side by side, they shall be a minimum of 10 feet apart and a minimum of 15 feet apart when placed end to end.
- Sand courts shall have minimum sand depth of 18 inches.
- All markings on concrete playing surfaces shall be applied using a wear-resistant, colored substance. Color to be determined and approved by the City during design.

Landscaping

- Plantings shall be low-water use plants with simple maintenance needs.
- Plants should be carefully selected for the function they will perform as well as for their appearance.
- It is better to leave views into and out of the park rather than to solidly enclose it.
- During design, diagram anticipated pedestrian movement and place groundcover and shrubs appropriately to assure the preservation of the plantings.
- Please refer to the Planning and Zoning Design Guidelines for more information.